

CONFERENCE *connection*

Alabama • Georgia • Mississippi
South Carolina • Tennessee • NW Florida

SOUTHEAST UCC Conference



August 1, 2016

Around the Conference and Beyond...



Disaster volunteers urgently needed for SC

Attention potential volunteers! South Carolina homeowners still struggling to recover from last fall's devastating storms and floods need your help. Week-long work teams are being recruited now, especially and urgently for September and October. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Southeast Conference Youth Attend National Youth Event

A number of folks from the Southeast Conference traveled down to Orlando for the 2016 National Youth Event. Our conference was represented by youth from Church of the Savior, Knoxville accompanied by Tonya Barnette and John Gill; two Piedmont students as volunteers, Grace Lyman Barner and Ben Thornburg, who are members of Praxis UCC in Americus, Georgia; and June Boutwell, Conference Minister.

[View photos and more on our website.](#)

From the Conference Office



We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2016. Each month, we will publish a weekly list for the month and post them weekly on our Facebook page. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter,

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Coming Events

SEC Staff Meeting

Thu, August 4, 2016
Conference Office

Conference Staff

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share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

- [Click here to download the entire 2016 prayer list](#)

Highlights:

- Blessings for **Rev. Laurie Hill** whose last Sunday at Fairfield Glade Community Church in Tennessee will be August 7. She has accepted a call at a UCC church in Illinois.
- Prayers for the family of **Rev. John Deckenback**, who died on July 19. He served for 24 years as Conference Minister of Central Atlantic Conference and was well known to many in the UCC. [Read more.](#)
- A **service of prayer and lament** for the ongoing violence in our world and across our country, for the loss of lives due to gun violence and racism, for the needs of the whole human family will be held Sunday, Aug. 7, at 3 p.m. at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, 4814 Paper Mill Rd SE, Marietta 30067. All are welcome.

Churches in Transition:

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; Pensacola UCC, Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Beloved Community, Birmingham Alabama; First United Church, Belvidere Tennessee.

Jottings from June

In many churches, late summer is a time for preparation and early fall a time to kick-off programs. Conference ministry is similar in that kind of planning. There are several pieces that will be put into place this fall and winter as Southeast Conference continues to be transformed into the ministry to which God calls us.



The designated term for the Conference Minister ends February 28, 2017. However, the delegates at our 50th Annual Meeting voted to proceed with calling an Interim Conference Minister. The Board of Directors is working on this process and will keep the members of the Southeast Conference informed. But there may be some timing considerations related to exit dates for me and start dates for the one that will come to serve you.

The recommendation to the delegates at annual meeting outlined other options including settled, another designated, or acting conference minister. The recommendation was to proceed with an interim as there is much work to be done yet to determine the plans for ministry in the Southeast Conference. I support that recommendation as it has taken all of my time here to address needs in the administrative and financial ministries of the Conference office. I am pleased to say that we will have strong Board leadership going forward and that there will be a solid organization foundation to build on including a balanced budget for 2017 when the Interim Conference Minister begins his or her service.

I often speak about "right-sizing the ministry" with churches in the search and call process and in local churches where I have

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been called as an interim minister. Every organization, including churches, have seasons of maturity and need and often our financial and administrative functions don't mirror the current need. That is what I have tried to do in my time among you-right-size the ministry for our current situation and to build relational and connectional ministries so that you-the churches, pastors, and members of the Southeast Conference-become the conversationalists and decision makers that determine your own path for ministry as the Body of Christ in the Southeast Conference.

There are two immediate tasks for this fall. One is a project to convert all the pastor and church files and some administrative files to a digital format. Technology has been a great aid to us in connecting and reducing costs and we are increasingly sharing information by digital means whether in having access to files on-line or meeting via a web platform. The other project is to let go of our physical location and move to a "virtual" office. With recent staff reductions, my travel schedule, and no longer meeting in person regularly, we cannot continue to justify the cost of maintaining office space. I have been a conference staff person who worked out of a home office and it is very doable and certainly frees up resources for ministry rather than paying for a building.

The Board of Directors welcome your thoughts, questions, comments, anxieties, and hopes, as do I. Please do not hesitate to be in contact with the Board or the Conference Office if you have something to discuss or share.

A Kudzu Pilgrimage: Liberal Congregationalism in the Southland

In the overall spectrum of American Christianity, Congregationalism has, for better or worse, occupied a liberal place on the theological and cultural registers. The South, where an early attempt to re-create the orderly, conscientious culture of Puritanism dissipated into a slave-dependent economy and reactionary ideas about life and faith, would prove a very difficult place to plant a non-authoritarian variant of Christianity, given that the "Lost Cause" in the wake of the War Between the States would convince most people that theirs was a sacred society and that all others were defective at best and pagan at worst. [Read the entire story.](#)

50th Anniversary History Books Available

Copies of the 50th Anniversary history of the Southeast Conference are still available. The cost is \$25 which includes shipping and handling.

Please send a note detailing how many copies are desired and the complete mailing address along with a check for the total amount. Or you may pay through our [on-line contribution site](#) noting the payment is for History Book and emailing the shipping details to info@secucc.org. Please allow 2-3 weeks for processing.

Training and Retreat Opportunities

African American Women in Ministry Conference is Oct 13-15

Registration is now open for African American Women in Ministry Conference to be held at Franklinton Center in North Carolina

October 13-15. Apply as early as possible if you need scholarship assistance. Rev. Charmaine Penn Johnson serving Kirkwood UCC in Atlanta is one of the co-chairs of the conference. Come: let us find hope For Such a Time as This.

[Learn more.](#)

6th Annual Retired Servants Conference/ Retreat is Oct 3-5

You are invited to attend the Sixth Annual Retired UCC Servants Conference/Retreat that will be held Monday dinner through Wednesday morning on October 3-5, 2016. This event is being planned for Retired UCC Servants of the Southeast and Southern Conferences of the UCC. It is being held at Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC amid the beauty of fall coming to the NC mountains!

[Click here to view all the information on our website.](#)

Faith in Literature Festival, Oct 21-22

UNC Asheville and the Wake Forest School of Divinity will jointly convene Faith in Literature: A Festival of Contemporary Writers of the Spirit, a gathering of 11 writers whose work deeply engages-by embracing, complicating, or wrestling with-a faith tradition or spiritual practice. [Learn more.](#)